

Message Text

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AMCONSUL STUTTGART
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USAFE RAMSTEIN
USCINCEUR STUTTGART

UNCLAS DUSSELDORF 368

MIL ADDEES FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT GW
SUBJ: POPULAR REQUEST AGAINST NRW SCHOOL LAW SUCCESSFUL

REF: DUSSELDORF 340

1. THE POPULAR CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE NEW NORTH RHINE-
WESTPHALIAN (NRW) SCHOOL LAW INITIATED BY ELEVEN PARENTS
AND TEACHERS ASSOCIATIONS AND ACTIVELY AND VIGOROUSLY
SUPPORTED BY THE NRW/CDU (SEE REFTEL) PROVED TO BE
HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL FOR ITS SPONSORS. THE REQUIRED NUMBER
OF SIGNATURES TO BRING ABOUT A REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE
WAS 2.36 MILLION OR 20 PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS.
DURING THE TWO WEEKS OF THE CAMPAIGN 3.63 MILLION
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VOTERS OR 29.9 PERCENT OF THE ELIGIBLE VOTERS
SIGNED THE REQUEST. THE REQUEST WAS MOST STRONGLY
SUPPORTED IN THE RURAL CATHOLIC AREAS, BUT THIS
SUPPORT ALONE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT IF THE
RUHR CITIES, THE TRADITIONAL SPD STRONGHOLDS, HAD
NOT SHOWN A REMARKABLY HIGH RATE OF SUPPORT FOR THE
ACTION.

2. THE NRW LAND GOVERNMENT SAW THE WRITING ON THE WALL AND RENOUNCED A SUBMISSION OF THE DISPUTED LEGISLATION TO A POPULAR REFERENDUM. NRW MINISTER OF CULTURE, JUERGEN GIRGENSOHN (SPD) ANNOUNCED THAT THE LAW WOULD BE RESCINDED. HAD THE GOVERNMENT (ADMINISTRATION) BEEN ORIGINALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MEASURE, INSTEAD OF THE SPD/FDP FACTION, ITS RESIGNATION WOULD HAVE BEEN UNAVOIDABLE. SINCE, HOWEVER, THE LAW WAS INTRODUCED BY THE LATTER, NO IMMEDIATE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES ARE EXPECTED, SINCE A PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY CAN BE UNSEATED ONLY BY A REGULAR ELECTION.

3. LEADING CDU REPRESENTATIVES NOTED THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE REQUEST HAD CHANGED THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE. IT HAD TAUGHT THE GOVERNMENT, SUPPORTED BY ONLY A SMALL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY, THAT IT COULD NO LONGER RULE AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE POPULATION. THE OUTCOME OF THE REQUEST WILL AFFORD THE CDU VALUABLE AMMUNITION IN FORTHCOMING POLITICAL DISPUTES AND CAMPAIGNS. RIDING ON THE CREST OF ITS VICTORY, THE CDU ALSO REQUESTED THAT HENCEFORTH POPULAR REQUESTS BE FACILITATED BY LOWERING THE REQUIRED PERCENTAGE OF SUPPORTERS. IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE CDU WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING THIS BECAUSE IT COULD ONLY BE BROUGHT ABOUT BY A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT REQUIRING A TWO-THIRD MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. BLIGH
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